Crazy Names

My name is ghetto with a capital G.
It fits me well. Like me, my name will leave
you confused. Jyquetta is a concoction of syl-
lables and sounds that my mother brewed up
from an old crush’s girlfriend. She liked the
guy so much that she became friends with his
girlfriend, Marquette. That’s where the Quetta
part of my name came from. A couple of years
ago I discovered that Quetta is the name of a
city in Pakistan. I was so happy when I found
that out, but now I don’t care for the fact.
Neither my mother nor I have any idea where
she got the “Jy”.
Markeen is my middle name; she took the
first part of Marquetta for Markeen. But my
mother told me that Markeen is an African
princess’s name. I didn’t believe her, so I
looked it up. Sure enough, it was true. She was
just lucky on that one. How is my first name
going to be Ghetto, and my middle name
African? Doesn’t that make you go hmmm? I
use my mother’s last name, Santiago. Leave it
to my mother to give me a Spanish last name.
I’m glad she didn’t give me my father’s last
name, Repress. Ugh, I can’t imagine being
called Jyquetta Markeen Repress. That would
really be a trip. My last name is also the name
of two different cities, one in the Dominican
Republic and another in Chile.
The name Jyquetta Markeen Santiago is cul-
turally diverse. That is the coolest thing about
it. I have a ghetto first name, an African middle
name, and a Spanish last name. What was my
mother thinking? Whatever it was, I’ll never
change my name. I’ve learned to appreciate it.
Vontanivia, Kayebis, Shanqonda, and
Chanda are the names she gave my other sis-
ters. I’m glad I was the first one.

By Jyquetta Santiago

Pink Sweater

Shattered ceramic, muffled pain,
surfaced bruises. Shivering I gather
the sweater you bought for me that I never
did like. The pink one with its explosion
of fluffy soft white marshmallow flowers.
Feminine, beautiful, perfect. Everything
you constantly say I’m not. I wear it for
you to be happy Mami, but now when I
most need its comfort, I can barely feel the
fabric as it hugs around my skin. Why are
my lips trembling, my body quivering? Why
won’t it armor me from the coldness? The
glacier that permanently inhabits my bones.
A hidden cave of sadness. Fear consumes
my heart. Perhaps I’ve damaged it. I think
in this very second Mami, I find truth to the
words that you would scream, causing me
to weep in sadness,

“Mala agradecida, nunca puedes hacer
nada bien.” I could never do anything right.
Broken. I awake as the Monster confronts
me. The Ogre, the Beast, your lover (but
not my father) screams and departs while
a smile decorates your face and you con-
tently obey. How, Mami, can you smile?
You open the door. You pack my suitcase.
In the kitchen evil celebrates. The worms
feast inside my belly. Cold arroz con pollo
and my fork dancing to a zombie rhythm
as I dissect. The wounds, the fragile heart.
Tainted innocence. Our last meal as a
family. You say “apurate y come” but my
mouth is dry, my body is paralyzed, my
mind refuses to think. But not my eyes. My
big brown eyes continue to cry a river, and
I panic, afraid that we will all drown.

You say it’s time for me to leave. How
can you still wear a smile? Black heart, on
a petite woman, fair, beautiful. Why are
you so beautiful, Mami? You say you love
the sounds I hear from your bedroom at
night and that they alone surpass the idea
of my simple existence. My inferior cries.
You close the door behind me. Naked,
petrified, and very alone. I exist. Why can’t
you see that? You cried for hours in agoniz-
ing pain when you brought me into this
world. Papi even says you bit the nurse in
pain. Isn’t that true, Mami? But I am no lon-
ger real. In your red party dress, glorified
curves, an immaculate replica of a Spanish
porcelain doll, you dance with him. But the
little girl with the pink ugly sweater that no
one likes doesn’t exist.

By Jennifer Suarez

InterAmerican Campus